Alberta
LEARNING

Beyond MIRS Pilot Project Assessment

Final Report

September 2004

This document contains advice to the Minister of Learning

105-04253/

Beyond MIRS Pilot Project Assessment, Final Report

Prepared by System Improvement and Reporting Division
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Beyond MIRS Pilot Project Assessment
Final Report

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Beyond MIRS Pilot Project Assessment
Final Report

A. Executive Summary

The fundamental purpose of the *Beyond MIRS Pilot Project* is to develop a more efficient and integrated model of student information that will meet a comprehensive set of information requirements at multiple levels of the education system, including the need to evaluate program effectiveness, or how well particular program interventions are working for subsets of the student population in response to student needs. One way of doing this has been to report on Grade Level of Achievement (GLA) that was first introduced in 1993-94. The *Beyond MIRS Pilot Project* is seeking to explore and identify strategies that are effective in supporting province-wide implementation of GLA for grades one to nine.

ET approved a pilot of *Beyond MIRS*, which commenced in September 2003. The following six school authorities have participated as part of the pilot:

- Edmonton Public School Board, District No. 7
- Edmonton Catholic Regional Division
- Calgary School District N. 19
- Chinook's Edge School Division
- Golden Hills School Division
- Red Deer Catholic Regional Division

All school authorities that participated in the pilot were part of a pilot review. The review was undertaken in two phases. Phase One involved interviews with individuals and Phase Two involved a focus group session with participants who had been directly involved with the Beyond MIRS pilot. The focus group session explored perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) associated with collecting GLA data province-wide.

The recommendations which follow emerged from the review and are focused on successful implementation of GLA.

Recommendation 1: That GLA be reported province-wide for all students in graded curriculum, including those with special needs. The GLA would identify the specific numeric grade level achieved by each student.

Recommendation 2. That Alberta Learning adopt the strategy of mandating GLA by a specified date, as opposed to optional or pilot implementation.

Recommendation 3: That GLA be phased-in for Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies as follows:

2004-05: A continuation of the pilot with all school authorities invited to participate. This year would also be used to prepare an implementation strategy, inclusive of PD, a communications plan, and related support materials.

2005-06: GLA is mandatory for all school authorities, with the requirement that one or more schools submit GLA data to Alberta Learning for Language Arts and Mathematics. Data does not need to be reported to parents.

2006-07: Language Arts and Mathematics GLA reporting to Alberta Learning and to parents becomes mandatory for all schools province-wide;

2007-08: Science and Social Studies GLA reporting to Alberta Learning and to parents becomes mandatory for all schools province-wide.

Recommendation 4: That Alberta Learning align the implementation of GLA with the concomitant development of the data information systems within the department to ensure smooth data submission and reporting structures.

Recommendation 5: That Alberta Learning require all school authorities to develop a policy that addresses the method and frequency of GLA reporting to parents.

Recommendation 6: That Alberta Learning, in partnership with school authorities, develop a plan to optimize the use of existing Professional Development resources, with highly strategic application of any additional resources to support development and implementation of GLA.

Recommendation 7: That Alberta Learning provide a core of expertise to assist districts with implementation.

Recommendation 8: That Alberta Learning develop and implement a communication strategy/plan to support communication across the province and within school authorities about GLA.

Recommendation 9: That Alberta Learning develop a provincial 'Guide to GLA Implementation' to assist school authorities and support provincial implementation, inclusive of: how GLA data will be used by Alberta Learning, implementation timelines, project plan, key deliverable, to name a few.

Recommendation 10: That a formal announcement be communicated to all school authorities by April 2005 regarding the mandatory implementation of GLA reporting for Mathematics and Language Arts in the 2005-06 school year.

B. Introduction

In 2001 System Improvement and Reporting developed recommendations for an enhanced Management Information and Reporting (MIRS) database for use by school jurisdictions in the province (hereafter referred to as *Beyond MIRS*). A report titled "Beyond MIRS – New Directions for Program Evaluation: Pilot Project Backgrounder" identified the need for such an updated database as follows (Executive Summary, page ii):

> The development of the Management Information Reporting Schedules (MIRS) grew out of a need to obtain information on the impacts on student achievement of targeted funding programs such as the Early Literacy Initiative (ELI) and Technology Integration Funding (TIF), English as a Second Language (ESL) and Special Education (Spec. Ed.).
>
> The ad hoc nature of collecting program evaluation data through the MIR Schedules, however, imposes a significant reporting burden on schools and jurisdictions. Also, much of the information is of questionable value for evaluative purposes, as most of the funded programs work in concert with other factors to influence student outcomes. Therefore, a need was identified to develop a more efficient and integrated model of student information that will meet a comprehensive set of information requirements at multiple levels of the education system, including the need to evaluate program effectiveness or how well particular program interventions are working for subsets of the student population in response to student needs.

ET approved a pilot of *Beyond MIRS*, which commenced in September 2003. The following six school jurisdictions have participated as part of the pilot:

- Edmonton School District No. 7
- Edmonton Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 7
- Calgary School District N. 19
- Chinook's Edge School Division
- Golden Hills School Division
- Red Deer Catholic Regional Division

Reporting on Grade Level of Achievement (GLA) was first introduced in 1993-94 with very limited implementation undertaken province-wide. The *Beyond MIRS Pilot Project* is seeking to explore and identify strategies that are effective in supporting province-wide implementation of GLA for grades one to nine.

This report summarizes findings of an assessment of the *Beyond MIRS* pilot project. The assessment parameters are provided in Appendix G.1.

C. Assessment Methodology

C.1. Areas of Enquiry

The *Beyond MIRS Pilot Project* assessment was focused on the following areas of enquiry and means of responding to these:

1. What strategies and processes support enhanced capacity within jurisdictions and schools to support making grade-level of achievement judgments for each student?
   - Identification of strategies and processes that have helped or would help schools and teachers to determine grade level of achievement.
2. What are the best practices that have developed to date in collecting and reporting grade-level of achievement data in Alberta Learning's *Beyond MIRS* database?
   - Interviews with Alberta Learning, jurisdiction and school staff to discover what practices have facilitated timely and efficient data collection and submission.
3. What are the perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with extending this initiative province-wide?
   - A SWOT analysis will be conducted with a representative group of Alberta Learning, jurisdiction and school staff.
4. What are the potential benefits to Alberta Learning, school jurisdictions, schools and parents of having classroom-based student achievement data included in the Alberta Learning Student Information System (SIS)?
   - The perceptions of Alberta Learning, jurisdiction and school staff, and of parents, as to the utility of classroom-based student achievement information (including PAT data) as part of the Alberta Learning SIS, and possible analysis based on this data.

At the outset of the project, it had been envisioned that the relationship between school-based level of achievement and Provincial Achievement Test (PAT) results would also be investigated. However, the Grade Level of Achievement data was not available in time for this to be part of the initial pilot assessment. An examination of this relationship is planned for the fall of 2004.

An assessment of the identified areas of enquiry was undertaken in two phases, with phase one involving interviews and phase two a focus group session involving knowledgeable participants.

C.2. Phase One: Stakeholder Interviews

Interviews were conducted with individuals from each of the schools participating in the pilot as well as with each of the six district Beyond MIRS pilot coordinators. Within each school interviews were conducted with the following: principal (or designate), teacher, and parent. The principal was asked to identify the parent to be interviewed from their school. In a few cases, a parent was not selected at a school due to the fact that the parents were not yet aware of the Beyond MIRS pilot as the school was in the very early stages of implementation. All

interviews were conducted in May and June, 2004. A list of interviewees is provided in Appendix G.2.

C.3. Phase Two: Focus Group

A focus group session was held on August 20, 2004, involving individuals who have been directly involved with the Beyond MIRS pilot. A list of focus group participants is provided in Appendix G.3. Six school board representatives; one parent and three Alberta Learning staff participated in the focus group. The session was facilitated by two System Improvement and Reporting Division (SIR) managers, assisted by a SIR Research Officer.

The focus group session explored the perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with a specific implementation strategy for collecting GLA data province-wide. The group was asked to first consider external opportunities and threats (or risks) associated with the implementation strategy, and then to consider internal strengths and weaknesses. In this context "external" was defined as considerations beyond Alberta Learning and/or the schools and jurisdictions implementing GLA; "internal" was defined as capacities within Alberta Learning and/or the schools and jurisdictions.

The group was first asked to brainstorm the perceived opportunities presented by the proposed implementation strategy. Nominal group technique was then used to rank these opportunities. Each participant was given ten votes and was asked to allocate them among the opportunities identified, assigning as many points as he/she felt was warranted to the most important opportunities. The aggregate points assigned by all ten workshop participants were then used to establish the relative ranking of the opportunities. This approach was also used successively to rank the threats, strengths and weaknesses.

C.4. Limitations

The following limitations to the study are identified to ensure proper context when interpreting the results.

- Originally, an analysis of the GLA data submitted by each jurisdiction was planned. This was not done as the data is being submitted in September, 2004; thus not in time to permit analyses for this report. However, the data is being analyzed by the Alberta Learning Beyond MIRS coordinator and will be available later in the fall, 2004.
- The results from the interviews and focus group discussion are based on selected individuals to gain their perspectives on the Beyond MIRS pilot. While all the individuals selected represented the key groups associated with the pilot, they were not selected randomly. This was done to ensure that interview responses were based on direct knowledge of the Beyond MIRS initiative.
- The information contained in this report includes the perceptions of individuals associated with the pilot and thus, does not reflect the views of other school-based educators or parents.

D. Findings

D.1. Phase One

Interviews were conducted with individuals from all school districts and schools that were part of the pilot. This included school district representative principals, teachers, and parents. Schools were asked to identify parents to participate in the interviews. As well, individuals within Alberta Learning were interviewed to gain their perspectives on the Beyond MIRS pilot and to explore supports and challenges related to collection of grade level of achievement data province-wide. Individuals from the Basic and Information and Strategic Services Divisions were part of these interviews.

In all, seven jurisdiction representatives, eleven principals, eight teachers, six parents, and twelve Alberta Learning staff were interviewed. Not every respondent commented on every question, and in some of the open-ended questions, some respondents made multiple comments.

Jurisdiction, Principal, Teacher and Alberta Learning Interview Results

Interviewees were asked to respond to a predetermined set of questions. In all, seven representatives of jurisdictions, eleven principals, eight teachers, and twelve Alberta Learning staff were interviewed. For each of the interview questions the responses were coded then analyzed. A summary of the most frequent responses is provided below for each interview question. A complete listing and breakdown of all the comments and responses are included in Appendix G.4.

Table One
Most Frequent Responses to Interview Questions
Jurisdictions, Principals, Teachers and Alberta Learning Staff

Top Responses to Questions (Total number of respondents was 38)	**Responses**
What knowledge and skills are required to make a GLA assessment?	
Knowledge of curriculum at, above, and below grade being taught	32
Assessment skills/tools/strategies	25
Why is reporting GLA assessment difficult?	
Diversity of student profiles	8
Fear of damaging relationships with students/parents	4
Extensive knowledge of curriculum required	4
Lack of confidence	3
How do you handle the identified difficulties?	
Criteria, rubrics, and exemplars	11
Professional Development	8
Build in-depth knowledge of curriculum	4
Does difficulty change with grade level?	
Junior high grades are most difficult	4
GLA assessment difficulty increases with increase in grade level	4
No change with grade, but with subject	3
Assume GLA submission in the province is voluntary for all jurisdictions next year and compulsory the year after? Is this realistic?	
Yes (with some stipulations)	11
No	20
Why is the implementation plan unrealistic?	
Require time to learn the curriculum and structure instruction	7
Need time for buy-in	7
Necessary exemplars, rubrics, assessment tools and strategies are not ready	6
Extensive PD necessary	6

Table One Continued
Most Frequent Responses to Interview Questions
Jurisdictions, Principals, Teachers and Alberta Learning Staff

Top Responses to Questions (Total number of respondents was 38)	**Responses**
What are the potential benefits of GLA data to Alberta Learning?	
Greater consistency of standards across the province	7
Allows Alberta Learning to analyze curriculum/ issues	4
Supports program evaluation	3
Supports the monitoring of student achievement	3
Facilitates the tracking of actual progress in a system where often students are promoted socially (i.e. even if they are not at grade level)	3
What are the potential benefits of GLA data to School Jurisdictions?	
Consistency of standards	9
Highlights school/ program achievement	9
Helps target resources and instructional needs	5
Facilitates program planning	3
What are the potential benefits of GLA data to Schools?	
Focuses planning	10
Consistency of standards	9
Increases teacher collaboration and personal growth	7
Determines instructional needs of students	5
What are the potential benefits of GLA data to Parents?	
Helps parents to know where child is at	22
What school decisions can be informed with this data?	
Helps schools to decide on the provision of modified programming (includes identification of those in need)	16
Facilitates making staffing and budget allocation decisions	4
Facilitates class organization (streaming)	3
Are there analysis/ reports that would be useful to you?	
School/ program reports	5
Results correlated with PATs and Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test CCATs	4
Percentage and number of students at, above, or below grade level	3
School-by-school information	3
Comparisons across jurisdictions	3
Is there a fit between GLA and other data collection that occurs?	**N=26**
Yes	21

Table One Continued
Most Frequent Responses to Interview Questions
Jurisdictions, Principals, Teachers and Alberta Learning Staff

Top Responses to Questions (Total number of respondents varied as not all groups were asked all questions)	**Responses**
Are you aware of the Guide requirements relative to reporting GLA to parents? (Total number of respondents was 19)	
Yes	13
No	3
What did you do to support making grade-level of achievement judgments for each student? (Total number of respondents was 18)	
PD (especially assessment)	9
Provision of checklists, exemplars, rubrics and criteria	5
Ensure understanding of Program of Studies	3
What, if any, is the administrative burden for collecting and submitting Beyond MIRS data? (Total number of respondents was 18)	
None	3
Developing buy-in	3
Funding	2
Professional development	2
Time 2	
How did you deal with this? (Total number of respondents was 11)	
Release time to learn about Beyond MIRS	2
What are the top three ideas that you employed that helped implement Beyond MIRS? (Total number of respondents was 18)	
Teacher training and support	8
Establish rubrics, criteria and exemplars	6
Deconstruction of the Program of Studies	4
What training have you received in GLA assessment? (Total number of respondents was 19)	
In-service in rubrics and standards	3
Alberta Assessment Consortium	3
Workshops in GLA and assessment	3

Parent Interview Results

The following are the most frequent responses to questions posed to the six parents interviewed. A complete summary of comments made by the parents is provided in Appendix G.5.

Table Two
Most Frequent Responses to Interview Questions—Parents

Top Responses to Questions (Total number of respondents was 6)	**Responses**
What type of achievement information do you receive from the school?	
Letter grades	5
Percentages	3
How useful is the data to you?	
The data is valuable	2
Value of the data implied through parental comments	4
How will you use the data?	
To talk to my child	5
Are there school decisions that can be informed with this data? If yes, give examples.	
Schools plan special classes (interventions) for those above and below grade level	3
Is/would grade level of achievement by subject be valuable to you? Why?	
To know where my child stands	4
So I can help my child	3
From your point of view, what are the best ways for a school to communicate student achievement information?	
Parent-teacher interviews	4
Regular contact when concerns exist (or re gifted students)	3
Report cards	3
Share teachers' expectations and standards	3

D.2. Phase Two

Phase two of the data collection included a discussion of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) associated with the hypothetical implementation strategy for GLA outlined in Table Three. This implementation strategy was presented to provide a basis for a focused discussion of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of implementing GLA.

Table Three
Grade Level Assessment
Hypothetical Implementation Strategy

What is proposed?	Grade level of achievement (GLA) assessment for every student • GLA to be determined in L.A., Social, Math, Science • GLA data to be submitted to Alberta Learning and reported to parents
Who would be involved?	• All students in graded curriculum • Includes those with special needs
When would this happen?	• Voluntary in 2004/05 • Compulsory for all schools and all students in 2005/06
Why is this necessary?	• A requirement of the Guide to Education since 1993/94: "Teachers shall ensure that information is effectively communicated to parents about---the grade level(s) the child has achieved in relation to the grade levels of the provincial programs of study----." • Teachers need to know—to plan remediation. • Parents need to know—honesty and accuracy in reporting. • Students need to know.
How will this be accomplished?	To be determined – but areas to be addressed may include: • Training and PD in knowledge of assessment and curriculum. • Role of professional learning communities • Supporting documents • Rubrics • Manuals • Assessment Tools • Data systems • Data transmission • Coordination • Education planning • Provincial supports • Jurisdiction supports • Etc

The ranked strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are provided in Appendix G.6. The highest rated items are summarized in Table Four.

Table Four
Top Ranked Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Top Ranked Items	Weight
Strengths	
GLA is the recognition of a teacher's capability of professionally making the assessment	25
Alberta has a well-defined, graded curriculum province wide (standard measuring scale)	21
GLA will supply better data to inform decision making at all levels	9
Strong knowledge base to draw from. There is already a capacity and an understanding of assessment	9
GLA is based on teacher judgments so there are a large number of data collection points, which increases the success/ accuracy of the assessment	8
Weaknesses	
Each jurisdiction needs to develop a mechanism to build understanding of the concept of GLA	20
Implementing all four subjects at once is too difficult. There are too many subjects with the addition of science and social studies, especially since those two subjects are so tied to content	17
Developing the necessary technology for data collection requires more time due to complexity	13
Teachers' willingness (or lack thereof) to accurately assign GLA and follow through with programming	9
Teachers fear that it will be used as an assessment of the teachers not of the students	7
Opportunities	
Parents have a better understanding of where child is at	24
Teachers more aware of curriculum	24
Improved philosophy of assessment through dialogue	21
Drive better programming (accountable, informed decisions)	7
Threats	
Is the data meaningful/ valid?	14
Inconsistencies between teachers	12
Lack of teacher knowledge about curriculum and assessment	11
Lack of parental understanding and buy-in	9
Lack of provincial and district support ($) to implement within the timeframe	8

E. Discussion of Findings

E.1. Benefits of GLA

Both the interview and the focus group findings revealed strong support in principle for GLA to be adopted province-wide. Key benefits cited included the following:

- Parents would have better information about the actual performance of their child/children relative to the curriculum.
- Schools would be better equipped to plan modified programming for those students below or above their nominal grade level.
- GLA would lead to an improved philosophy of assessment as a result of enhanced dialogue between teachers, students and parents. Assessment data will be based on multiple data collection points. Assessment will also be more focused on informing instructional strategies to help all students succeed.
- Improved understanding of the curriculum by teachers would lead to greater consistency in delivery of the curriculum across the province.
- Alberta Learning would be able to use the data, in conjunction with other assessment data, to assess the curriculum.
- GLA data could help target limited resources where they are most needed, to improve student outcomes and also to improve the curriculum.

E.2. Data Collection Strategies and Best Practices

Those involved in the pilot project reported that GLA assessment is difficult for teachers because of the diversity of student profiles and the extensive knowledge of the curriculum that is required to accurately evaluate a student's actual grade level of achievement relative to the Alberta curriculum. The following were identified as best practices in assisting teachers make valid GLA assessments:

- Development of checklists, rubrics, exemplars and criteria
- PD in assessment
- Development of resource materials and PD to assist teachers gain an in-depth knowledge of the curriculum beyond that of their own grade level.

E.3. Strengths in Implementing GLA

Significant strengths were identified that would support province-wide GLA. Chief amongst these are:

- The teachers' professional capability to make the assessments.
- Alberta's well-defined, graded curriculum.
- The strong existing knowledge base that is available to draw on. This recognizes the considerable experience already gained in several jurisdictions with GLA.
- Strong support on the part of jurisdictions who have had sufficient time to develop and implement GLA.

E.4. Challenges

Although there was strong support in principle for province-wide implementation of GLA, there was also a recognition of considerable challenges that would need to be overcome before province-wide GLA provides reliable and consistent assessment data.

- Jurisdictions will need time to develop the buy-in and the capacities needed to build a common understanding of the concept and utility of GLA assessments on the part of all teachers, administrators and parents. Included would be the need to develop rubrics, exemplars, PD, and information sessions.
- The difficulty in implementing GLA increases with the number of subjects; difficulty also changes depending on the nature of the subject.
- Data collection province-wide presents a technological challenge for Alberta Learning because of the complexity of the data systems that are involved and the competing demands on the resources that maintain these data-systems. As well, some changes to the school reporting systems may also need to occur.
- There is an expressed fear that valid GLA assessments might lead to a backlash from students and parents, causing some teachers to resist providing accurate assessments, particularly for students functioning considerably below their nominal grade level.
- There is also a concern that teachers may avoid accurate assessments because once the learning gap is identified, it will become incumbent on teachers to address this by developing student-specific instructional strategies.

F. Recommendations

The following recommendations support making grade level of achievement (GLA) implementation successful.

Recommendation 1: That GLA be reported province-wide for all students in graded curriculum, including those with special needs. The GLA would identify the specific numeric grade level achieved by each student.

Discussion:

- *Parents responded in the review of the pilot that the specific grade of achievement for their child would be helpful and desirable.*
- *This type of reporting communicates an openness and transparency with respect to student achievement; however, it needs to be recognized that some teachers may feel threatened in that GLA reporting creates an expectation related to acting on the information.*

Recommendation 2. That Alberta Learning adopt the strategy of mandating GLA by a specified date, as opposed to optional or pilot implementation.

Discussion:

- *Not adopting a 'mandating' strategy may signal to schools and school authorities that a 'laissez-faire' approach to implementation is acceptable.*
- *This would result in 'staggered' readiness to implement GLA and the validity of the data would be compromised.*

Recommendation 3: That GLA be phased-in for Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies as follows:

2004-05: A continuation of the pilot with all school authorities invited to participate. This year would also be used to prepare an implementation strategy, inclusive of PD, a communications plan, and related support materials.

2005-06: GLA is mandatory for all school authorities, with the requirement that one or more schools submit GLA data to Alberta Learning for Language Arts and Mathematics. Data does not need to be reported to parents.

2006-07: Language Arts and Mathematics GLA reporting to Alberta Learning and to parents becomes mandatory for all schools province-wide;

2007-08: Science and Social Studies GLA reporting to Alberta Learning and to parents becomes mandatory for all schools province-wide.

Discussion:

- *Jurisdictions have argued that to be able to plan adequately, they need to be notified of additional reporting requirements prior to the year in which data is to be submitted.*
- *Most school authorities need time (at least one year) to engage teachers in developing an understanding of what is intended and expected in relation to GLA. Most critical is time needed for teachers to gain a broader understanding of the curriculum surrounding the grade they teach and appropriate assessment strategies to make GLA decisions.*
- *The current pilot year (2004-05) will allow Alberta Learning time to prepare a communications strategy as well as the required supporting materials.*
- *Reporting on these four subjects (Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies) is currently a requirement in the Guide.*
- *During the review of the pilot, Language Arts and Mathematics were identified by most participants as the subjects to begin the implementation with.*
- *As well, Alberta Learning needs to develop and implement a strategy for developing the technical requirements needed to support receipt and analyses of GLA information from schools and/or school authorities.*

Recommendation 4: That Alberta Learning align the implementation of GLA with the concomitant development of the data information systems within the department to ensure smooth data submission and reporting structures.

Discussion:

- *There was concern expressed by Alberta Learning information services staff as to the timelines for this project and the current lack of a data support system for receiving and analyzing GLA information on a province-wide basis.*
- *It wouldn't make sense to adopt a GLA implementation timeline that can not be supported by the Alberta Learning information systems. Currently, information services staff have indicated the need for a two-year development timeframe.*

Recommendation 5: That Alberta Learning require all school authorities to develop a policy that addresses the method and frequency of GLA reporting to parents.

Discussion:

- *The review of current GLA implementation revealed diverse methods of GLA reporting to parents.*
- *A diversity of reporting methods may be appropriate; however, parents do have a right to know what performance information they will be provided and how they will receive the information.*

Recommendation 6: That Alberta Learning, in partnership with school authorities, develop a plan to optimize the use of existing Professional Development resources, with highly strategic application of any additional resources to support development and implementation of GLA.

Discussion:

- *In the pilot review, a key element in the successful implementation of GLA was support for teachers to gain an understanding of GLA and to develop the necessary accompanying scoring rubrics and guidelines beyond basic assessment strategies already being used by teachers.*

Recommendation 7: That Alberta Learning provide a core of expertise to assist school authorities with implementation.

Discussion:

- *Provincial leadership will provide targeted support for the implementation. Some of the activities would include leading and/or coordinating:*
    - *Developing a provincial GLA guide*
    - *Coordinating/supporting development scoring rubrics*
    - *Conducting in-service sessions for schools and school authorities*
    - *Coordinating the development of the data information requirements within Alberta Learning*
    - *Developing and implementing a provincial communication strategy*
    - *Assist school authorities with developing reporting strategies to parents and their communities*

- *Coordinate provincial supports that can relieve some of the demands of provincial implementation (i.e. Alberta Assessment Consortium, existing GLA practices used by Edmonton Public, Learner Assessment Branch, alignment with Alberta Commission on Learning recommendations...)*

Recommendation 8: That Alberta Learning develop and implement a communication strategy/plan to support communication across the province and within school authorities about GLA.

Discussion:

- *It will important for the same key messages to be communicated in a variety of ways for the province as a whole to implement GLA so as to achieve valid and reliable reporting of student achievement.*

Recommendation 9: That Alberta Learning develop a provincial 'Guide to GLA Implementation' to assist school authorities and support provincial implementation, inclusive of: how GLA data will be used by Alberta Learning, implementation timelines, project plan, key deliverables, to name a few.

Discussion:

- *This specific recommendation is included due the repeated requests for such a document by participants in the pilot review.*

Recommendation 10: That a formal announcement be communicated to all school authorities by April 2005 regarding the mandatory implementation of GLA reporting for Mathematics and Language Arts in the 2005-06 school year.

Discussion:

- School authorities emphasized the need for clear and early communication of all new data submission requirements.
- Communication of mandated requirements needs to occur prior to the beginning of a school-year to facilitate professional growth and resource allocation planning.

APPENDICES

G.1. Charter
G.2 List of Interviewees
G.3 List of Focus Group Attendees
G.4 Results of Interviews with Jurisdictions, Principals, Teachers and Alberta Learning Staff
G.5. Parental Interview Results
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Appendix G.1
Charter

SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT AND REPORTING
CHARTER AGREEMENT

DRAFT

Project: Beyond MIRS Pilot Project Assessment
Client Division: System Improvement and Reporting **Date:** April 28, 2004

Issue/Opportunity

System Improvement and Reporting developed recommendations for an enhanced Management Information and Reporting (MIRS) database for use by school authorities in the province (hereafter referred to as *Beyond MIRS*). A report titled "Beyond MIRS – New Directions for Program Evaluation: Pilot Project Backgrounder" identified the need for such an updated database as follows (Executive Summary, page ii):

> "The development of the Management Information Reporting Schedules (MIRS) grew out of a need to obtain information on the impacts on student achievement of targeted funding programs such as the Early Literacy Initiative (ELI) and Technology Integration Funding (TIF), English as a Second Language (ESL) and Special Education (SP. Ed.).
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> "The ad hoc nature of collecting program evaluation data through the MIR Schedules, however, imposes a significant reporting burden on schools and jurisdictions. Also, much of the information is of questionable value for evaluative purposes, as most of the funded programs work in concert with other factors to influence student outcomes. Therefore, a need was identified to develop a more efficient and integrated model of student information that will meet a comprehensive set of information requirements at multiple levels of the education system, including the need to evaluate program effectiveness or how well particular program interventions are working for subsets of the student population in response to student needs."

ET approved a pilot of *Beyond MIRS*, which commenced in September 2003. The following six school authorities have participated as part of the pilot:

- Edmonton School District No. 7
- Edmonton Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 7
- Calgary School District N. 19
- Chinook's Edge School Division
- Golden Hills School Division
- Red Deer Catholic Regional Division

This Charter sets out the objective and timelines for an assessment of the *Beyond MIRS* pilot being conducted with these six jurisdictions.

Project Description

The evaluators will be responsible for evaluating through interviews and/or survey instruments the implementation of the *Beyond MIRS* Pilot Project. Specifically, the evaluators will conduct an assessment that will address the following questions:

Questions Related to Data Collecting and Submission Processes

1. What strategies and processes support enhanced capacity within jurisdictions and schools to support making grade-level of achievement judgments for each student?
   - Identification of strategies and processes that have helped or would help schools and teachers to determine grade level of achievement.
2. What are the best practices that have developed to date in collecting and reporting grade-level of achievement data in Alberta Learning's *Beyond MIRS* database?
   - Interviews with Alberta Learning, jurisdiction and school staff to discover what practices have facilitated timely and efficient data collection and submission.
3. What are the perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with extending this initiative province-wide?
   - A SWOT analysis will be conducted with a representative group of Alberta Learning, jurisdiction and school staff.

Questions Related to Data Utility:

4. What is the relationship between school-based level of achievement and Provincial Achievement Test (PAT) results?
   - The key focus will be assessing the correlation between grade level of achievement data generated and submitted by pilot schools and the PATs results for these schools.
5. What are the potential benefits to Alberta Learning, school jurisdictions, schools and parents of having classroom-based student achievement data included in the Alberta Learning SIS?
   - The perceptions of Alberta Learning, jurisdiction and school staff, and of parents, as to the utility of classroom-based student achievement information (including PAT data) as part of the Alberta Learning SIS, and possible analysis based on this data.

Relationship to Department Business Plan

This project will support the following business plan goal and outcome:

Goal 2:	**Excellence in Learner Outcomes**
Outcome:	Learners demonstrate high standards
Strategy 2.B	Improve assessment of learner achievement *Implement "Beyond MIRS" pilot project to assess viability and usefulness of supplementing provincial achievement test data with classroom-based data*

Project Parameters

Project Advisory Team

A Project Advisory Team will be established to facilitate and assist with the evaluation as required. The Advisory Team will consist of a sub-committee of the *Beyond MIRS* Pilot Project Task Team and will be chaired by Dr. John Burger.

The Project Managers will meet with the Project Advisory Team at the beginning of the project, and any other times deemed necessary by the Project Managers.

Project Tasks and Timelines

The term of the project will be from April 26, 2004 to September 30, 2004. A preliminary workplan follows:

Deadline	**Task**
April 28	• Review by the *Beyond MIRS* Task Team of the project Charter. • Identification of Advisory Team members.
May 4	• Meeting of the Advisory Team to obtain input on the interview plan.
June 11	• Completion of interviews with jurisdiction & school staff and parents.
July 16	• Completion of interviews with Alberta Learning staff.
August 31	• Meeting of representatives from schools, jurisdiction staff and department staff to conduct a SWOT on expanded *Beyond MIRS* implementation. • Completion of correlation analysis.
September 24	• Meeting of *Beyond MIRS* Task Team to review the draft final report.
September 30	• Presentation of the Final Report to the ADM, System Improvement and Reporting

Project Team

Project Managers: Dennis Belyk & Bill Spaans
Advisory Committee Chair: John Burger

Budget

Travel and administrative costs associated with the project will be paid by System Improvement and Reporting.

Project Approval

Signatures: _____
ADM, System Improvement and Reporting

Dated: _____

Appendix G.2.
Interviewees

Alberta Learning

1.	Brian Perry	System Improvement Group
2.	Caroline Grimard	Legislative Services
3.	Collin Critch	Information Services
4.	Dianna Millard	School Improvement
5.	Donna Crowshoe	Aboriginal Services
6.	Donna Smith	Learner Assessment Branch
7.	Gail Campbell	Special Programs
8.	Jane Martin	ISS, Aboriginal Policy
9.	Laura Stewart	Information Services
10.	Linda Rankin	Information Services
11.	Lorraine Stewart	Special Programs
12.	Monte Krueger	System Improvement and Reporting

School Authority Representatives

1.	Anne Mulgrew	Edmonton Public School Board
2.	Curriculum Support: Language Arts	Calgary Public School Board
3.	Curriculum Support: Mathematics	Calgary Public School Board
4.	Lynne Paradis	Red Deer Catholic School Board
5.	Lissa Steele	Chinook's Edge School Board
6.	Michelle Drefs	Golden Hills School Board
7.	Monique Gibeau	Edmonton Catholic School Board

Principals

1.	Gerald Dove	Mother Theresa, Sylvan Lake
2.	Dale Skoreyko	Londonderry School
3.	Trevor Barkley	Bowcroft School
4.	Tracey Edwards	Cremona School
5.	John Edey	McKernan School
6.	John Clarke	Woman Junior High
7.	Linda Ingles	Velma E. Baker School
8.	Dan Ferguson	Westmount School
9.	Wade Peterson	Gleishen School
10.	Laurie Huntley	Brentwood School
11.	Marie Wilan and Margo	St. Mary's School

Teachers

1.	Jill Mielke	Mother Theresa, Sylvan Lake
2.	Dee	Londonderry School
3.	Jana Lewis	Bowcroft School
4.	Andrea Bodnar	Cremona School
5.	Gerry Hawkes	McKernan School
6.	Linda Lytle	Woodman School
7.	Irene Stuire	Velma E. Baker School
8.	Cheri Gillis	Westmount School

Parents

1.	Cathy Lichtenwald	Mother Theresa, Sylvan Lake
2.	Diane Goruk	Londonderry School
3.	Ali MacGregor	Bowcroft School
4.	Joy Erickson	Cremona School
5.	Laurie Janssen	McKernan School
6.	Kendra Black	Velma E. Baker School

Appendix G.3.
Focus Group Attendees[1]

1.	Werner Mailandt	Calgary Public School Board
2.	Jackie Lozeron	Golden Hills School Board
3.	Judith McIntyre	Red Deer Catholic School Board
4.	Lissa Steele	Chinook's Edge School Board
5.	Anne Mulgrew	Edmonton Public School Board
6.	Ellen McIntyre	Edmonton Public School Board, Parent
7.	Robert Smilanich	Edmonton Public School Board
8.	Betty Morris	Alberta Learning, Learner Assessment Branch
9.	Alfred Sakyi	Alberta Learning, Field Services
10.	Colin Critch	Alberta Learning, Information Services
11.	Dennis Belyk	Alberta Learning, System Improvement Group, Facilitator
12.	Bill Spaans	Alberta Learning, System Improvement Group, Facilitator
13.	Cinnamon Suyal	Alberta Learning, System Improvement Group, Support

[1] Representatives from the Edmonton Catholic, Golden hills and Red deer Catholic School Boards had also been invited, but were unable to attend.

Appendix G.4.
Results of Interviews with Jurisdictions, Principals, Teachers, and Alberta Learning Staff

Representatives of several different groups were asked to respond to the following questions. In all, seven representatives of jurisdictions, eleven principals, eight teachers, and twelve internal staff were interviewed. Not every respondent commented on every question, and in some of the open-ended questions, some respondents made multiple comments.

1. What knowledge and skills are required to make a GLA assessment?

Required knowledge and skills	Jurisdictions (N=7)	Principals (N=11)	Teachers (N=8)	Alberta Learning (N=12)	Total (N=38)
Knowledge of curriculum at, above, and below grade being taught	7	9	6	10	32
Assessment skills/tools/strategies	7	9	4	5	25
Student involvement	2				2
Specific criteria				2	2
How to interpret assessment data		1		1	2
Understand how children learn			2		2
How to use of rubrics & exemplars			2		2
Strategies for incorporating vastly different information into a single GLA	1				1
Confidence	1				1
Ability to conduct consensus building		1			1
Knowledge of organizing ideas		1			1

2(a). Why is reporting GLA assessment difficult?

Six jurisdictions, four principals, seven teachers, eight internal staff indicated that reporting GLA assessment is difficult.

Reasons for difficulty in reporting GLA assessment	Jurisdictions (N=7)	Principals (N=11)	Teachers (N=8)	Alberta Learning (N=12)	Total (N=38)
Diversity of student profiles	2	3	2	1	8
Fear of damaging relationships with students/parents	3	1			4
Extensive knowledge of curriculum required				4	4
Lack of confidence	2	1			3
Lack of standards, exemplars, and assessment materials	2				2
Difficult to judge exact level	1	1			2
Continuity between schools / jurisdictions questionable		1		1	2
Wide range of student abilities in each class			2		2
Concern over use of data	1				1
Validly quantifying data		1			1
New teachers lack experience (with curriculum)		1			1
Making it clear to parents		1			1
Require knowledge of student background			1		1
4 scale rubric is limiting			1		1
Boiling GLA down to one number			1		1
Time required			1		1
Different interpretation of GLA			1		1
Lack of assessment skills				1	1
Developing buy-in				1	1

2(b). How do you handle the identified difficulties?

Methods for handling identified difficulties	Jurisdictions (N=7)	Principals (N=11)	Teachers (N=8)	Alberta Learning (N=12)	Total (N=38)
Criteria, rubrics, and exemplars	3	2	2	4	11
Professional Development	3			5	8
Build in-depth knowledge of curriculum	2		2		4
Grade level teams		1	1		2
Prepare for backlash	1				1
HLAT to establish GLA	1				1
Aligned pilot with AISI		1			1
Balance units to get GLA		1			1
Curriculum and assessment modified		1			1
Stressed achievement exams		1			1
Got curriculum outcomes through assessment		1			1
Publicized Beyond MIRS to community		1			1
Group students			1		1
Pull students out for assessment			1		1
Use a variety of assessment tools			1		1
Develop distinct 5 level scale marking			1		1
Develop understanding of rubrics, portfolios, and self-assessment			1		1
Discuss achievement with previous teachers, cum cards, and parents			1		1
Discuss achievement with school assistants and teacher aides			1		1
Follow principal's direction			1		1
Consultation				1	1

2(c). Does difficulty change with grade level?

Does difficulty change with grade level?	Jurisdictions (N=7)	Principals (N=11)	Teachers (N=8)	Alberta Learning (N=12)	Total (N=38)
Junior high grades are most difficult	4				4
GLA assessment difficulty increases with increase in grade level	2			2	4
No change with grade, but with department	1	2			3
Earlier grades more difficult			1		1
More difficult for teachers who change grades/ subjects				1	1

3. **Assume GLA submission in the province is voluntary for all jurisdictions next year and compulsory the year after. Is this realistic? Why or why not?**

One of the jurisdictions, four principals, one teacher, and five internal staff indicated that the plan is feasible. These respondents generally qualified their responses with certain conditions that would have to be met. The majority of respondents indicated that the implementation plan is unrealistic.

Why implementation plan is unrealistic	Jurisdictions (N=7)	Principals (N=11)	Teachers (N=8)	Alberta Learning (N=12)	Total (N=38)
Require time to learn the curriculum and structure instruction	1	4	2		7
Need time for buy-in		1	6		7
Necessary exemplars, rubrics, assessment tools and strategies are not ready	3		3		6
Extensive PD necessary	2	1		3	6
Need answers from Alberta Learning (purpose)	1		2		3
Two years required to develop understanding across all four subjects	1		1		2
Need time to learn about Beyond MIRS			2		2
Extra time required for computer system				2	2
Need an action plan	1				1
Could not provide required curriculum support on such a large scale	1				1
Mandating too early would undermine credibility	1				1
Mandating would threaten jurisdictions (comparisons)		1			1
Need guidelines for implementation			1		1
Extra time required to prepare software partners				1	1

4(a). What are the potential benefits of GLA data to Alberta Learning?

Potential benefits to Alberta Learning	Jurisdictions (N=7)	Principals (N=11)	Teachers (N=8)	Alberta Learning (N=12)	Total (N=38)
Greater consistency of standards across the province	2	3	2		7
Allows Alberta Learning to analyze curriculum/ issues		1		3	4
Supports program evaluation	1	2			3
Supports the monitoring of student achievement		1	2		3
Facilitates the tracking of actual progress in social promotion system				3	3
Unsure	2				2
Useful for planning remediation				2	2
Cost saving (if replaces PAT)	1				1
Allows tracking	1				1
Facilitates verification of school alignment with standards		1			1
Allows deeper reporting		1			1
Facilitates communication with public on school achievement			1		1
Can feel confident student needs are being attended to			1		1
Strengthens provincial accountability system				1	1

4(b). What are the potential benefits of GLA data to School Jurisdictions?

Potential benefits to School jurisdictions	Jurisdictions (N=7)	Principals (N=11)	Teachers (N=8)	Alberta Learning (N=12)	Total (N=38)
Consistency of standards	3	3	3		9
Highlights school/ program achievement		3	3	3	9
Helps target resources and instructional needs	1	1	1	2	5
Facilitates program planning				3	3
Provides a demographic picture of which students need help	1				1
Provides general student information		1			1
Increased collaboration		1			1
Supplies annual data at all grade levels		1			1
Helps to establish standards for new teachers		1			1
Improved reporting to parents			1		1

4(c). What are the potential benefits of GLA data to Schools?

Potential benefits to Schools	Jurisdictions (N=7)	Principals (N=11)	Teachers (N=8)	Alberta Learning (N=12)	Total (N=38)
Focuses planning		2	2	6	10
Consistency of standards	3	3	3		9
Increases teacher collaboration and personal growth	1	3		3	7
Determines instructional needs of students	3		2		5
Smoothes transitions				4	4
Builds a better understanding of curriculum	1	2			3
Improvement follows focus			3		3
Facilitates tracking of children from school to school			2		2
Allows for monitoring of student achievement	1				1
Facilitates program evaluation/ informs practice	1				1
Leads to greater student success	1				1
Gives schools ownership of achievement assessment		1			1
Gives a broader scope of achievement		1			1
Teachers can assume leadership roles		1			1
Builds an improved understanding of data and analysis		1			1
Process of learning		1			1
Builds test taking knowledge		1			1
Provides a good class profile			1		1
Schools become more focused on learning			1		1

Better communication with parents			1		1
Increased teacher knowledge			1		1
Keeps teachers accountable and effective			1		1
Teachers able to substantiate marks			1		1
Facilitates appropriate student placement				1	1

4(d). What are the potential benefits of GLA data to Parents?

Potential benefits to Parents	**Jurisdictions (N=7)**	**Principals (N=11)**	**Teachers (N=8)**	**Alberta Learning (N=12)**	**Total (N=38)**
Helps parents to know where child is at	3	7	5	7	22
Honest reporting	2				2
Enables parents to help children	1				1
Inspires trust	1				1
Increases parental knowledge of standards		1			1
Kids needs are better met		1			1
Limited benefits (GLA only one number)		1			1
Parents know child's achievement in relation to other grade level students			1		1
Greater consistency and provincial standards				1	1
None				1	1

5. What school decisions can be informed with this data?

School decisions	Jurisdictions (N=7)	Principals (N=11)	Teachers (N=8)	Alberta Learning (N=12)	Total (N=38)
Helps schools to decide on the provision of modified programming (includes identification of those in need)	3	1	3	9	16
Facilitates making staffing and budget allocation decisions	2		1	1	4
Facilitates class organization (streaming)		2	1		3
Helps balance classes and create heterogeneous groupings		2			2
Facilitates curriculum revision				2	2
Allows for homogeneous grouping	1				1
Professional development		1			1
Reinforces assessment priorities		1			1
Groups/ teams students to meet direct needs			1		1
Improvement targets can be set				1	1
Facilitates student and community advising				1	1

6. Are there analysis/ reports that would be useful to you?

Analysis/ reports	Jurisdictions (N=7)	Principals (N=11)	Teachers (N=8)	Alberta Learning (N=12)	Total (N=38)
School/ program reports	1		2	2	5
Results correlated with PATs and CCATs	1	2		1	4
Percentage and number of students at, above, or below grade level	1	2			3
School-by-school information	1	1	1		3
Comparisons across jurisdictions	1	2			3
Achievement results		1	1		2
School and jurisdiction-level (no comparisons)				2	2
Disaggregation by gender, grade and curriculum implementation	1				1
Profile of student population within a school	1				1
School results in relation to provincial trends		1			1
Individual school improvement		1			1
Comparison to jurisdiction's standards			1		1
Percentage of students achieving as expected			1		1
Class profiles			1		1
Breakdown of reading and writing scores for specific content areas			1		1
Learn from other schools what approaches are working			1		1
GLA variation at the provincial and jurisdiction level				1	1

Integration of GLA data with student characteristics and programs				1	1
Segregated reports for the district or system				1	1
Diagnostic reports				1	1
Improvement reports				1	1

7. Is there a fit between GLA and other data collection that occurs?

Fit between GLA and other data collection?	Jurisdictions (N=7)	Principals (N=11)	Teachers (N=8)	Total (N=26)
Yes	5	11	5	21

8. Are you aware of the Guide requirements relative to reporting GLA to parents?

Awareness of Guide requirements	Principals (N=11)	Teachers (N=8)	Total (N=19)
Yes	9	4	13
No	0	3	3

9. What did you do to support making grade-level of achievement judgments for each student?

Support for GLA judgments	Jurisdictions (N=7)	Principals (N=11)	Total (N=18)
PD (especially assessment)	5	4	9
Provision of checklists, exemplars, rubrics and criteria	3	2	5
Ensure understanding of Program of Studies	2	1	3
Teachers charged with responsibility for developing rubrics	2		2
Meetings to ensure understanding and set plan of action	1	1	2
Team based planning by grade groupings and exemplar analysis		2	2
Release time		2	2
Monthly training for consultants to work with schools	1		1
GLA mandated and district policy rewritten	1		1
Specialist support provided		1	1
Established professional learning community		1	1

Staff sent to HLAT training		1	1
Play acting with students to develop skills		1	1
Teachers collected evidence		1	1
Communicated goals of Beyond MIRS to parents and students		1	1
Team Marking		1	1

10(a). What, if any, is the administrative burden for collecting and submitting Beyond MIRS data?

Administrative burden	Jurisdictions (N=7)	Principals (N=11)	Total (N=18)
None		3	3
Developing buy-in		3	3
Funding	2		2
Professional development	1	1	2
Time		2	2
Central office must ensure all schools upload GLA for all students	1		1
Increased workload for curriculum support team	1		1
Direct supervision of Beyond MIRS	1		1
Encouraging staff		1	1
Ensuring resources used appropriately		1	1
Technological (data entry)		1	1

10(b). How did you deal with this?

How to deal with burden	Principals (N=11)
Release time to learn about Beyond MIRS	2
Make time	1
Model enthusiasm	1
In-services and ongoing support	1
Small group, in school PD	1
Supportive to teachers	1
Ensure assessment matches what taught	1
Release time for marking	1
Teach how to assess and report accurately	1

11. What are the top three ideas that you employed that helped implement Beyond MIRS?

Top 3 ideas	Jurisdictions (N=7)	Principals (N=11)	Total (N=18)
Teacher training and support	3	5	8
Establish rubrics, criteria and exemplars	4	2	6

Deconstruct Program of Studies	1	3	4
Developed assessment skills		3	3
Collaboration		3	3
Preparation for backlash	2		2
Appropriate resources and materials ready ahead of time	2		2
Clarity from Alberta Learning	1	1	2
Tried with small population first		2	2
Play acting/ writing scenarios		2	2
Field expert	1		1
Network with those experienced in GLA	1		1
Encourage teachers to select rubrics	1		1
Look at formative based assessment strategies	1		1
Good plan in place	1		1
Strategy to help parents understand		1	1
Patience to ensure reliability/ validity		1	1
Provided clear explanation of GLA		1	1
Helped with sub costs		1	1
Time given for assessment		1	1
Did not communicate GLA to child		1	1

12. What training have you received in GLA assessment?

Training	Principals (N=11)	Teachers (N=8)	Total (N=19)
In-service in rubrics and standards	2	1	3
Alberta Assessment Consortium	2	1	3
Workshops in GLA and assessment		3	3
Trained by specialist in assessment and curriculum	2		2
Professional learning communities	2		2
Trained in assessment and curriculum by using student work	1	1	2
Learn as you go	1	1	2
Studied curriculum in depth		2	2
2 lead teachers went to training session and trained staff	1		1
Own assessment team workshops	1		1
Direct consultant	1		1
In-service on theory behind HLATs		1	1
Central office info sessions		1	1
In-service on assessment for learning and of learning		1	1
Informal mentoring		1	1
Provincial test (interpreted)		1	1
None		1	1

Appendix G.5.
Parental Interview Results

1. What type of achievement information do you receive from the school?
The six parents commented on the type of achievement information they receive from the schools. Five respondents indicated that they receive letter grade achievement information. Two of these parents indicated that they receive percentages in addition to letter grades, and one parent indicated that she receives only percentages. Two claim to receive comments on student achievement, such as "excellent" or "acceptable" (associated with elementary school by one parent). Two respondents indicated that they receive grade level of performance by subject. Two mentioned receiving specific comments along with the grades assigned, and one indicated receiving generic comments and complained that they are not specific enough. Finally, one parent mentioned receiving reflections on curriculum achievement and coming curriculum.

Type of achievement information **Number of Parents Interviewed = 6**	**Responses**
Letter grades	5
Percentages	3
"Excellent, acceptable, …"	2
Grade level of performance by subject	2
Specific comments	2
Generic comments	1
Reflections on curriculum achievement and coming curriculum	1

2(a). How useful is the data to you?
Two of the parents specifically responded to this question by indicating that the data is valuable. The other parents implied that it is valuable through their comments.

2(b). How will you use the data?
Five of the six parents interviewed use the GLA data to talk to their children. One of the respondents indicated that the data is also used to set goals, and another to plan extracurricular work. One parent indicated that the data is used to understand where her child stands. Another parent stated that the data should only be used to compare a child's progress to himself (personal achievement)—the data should NOT be used to compare a child to other children in the class.

How will you use the data?	**Responses**
To talk to my child	5
To set goals	1
To plan extracurricular work	1
To know where my child stands	1
To compare child's progress to himself NOT to other children	1

2(c). Are there school decisions that can be informed with this data? If yes, give examples.

Three parents responded to the question of what school decisions can be informed with GLA data. They all specified that schools could use the data to plan special classes and interventions for those performing above and below grade level.

School decisions	Responses
Schools plan special classes (interventions) for those above and below grade level	3

3. Is/ would grade level of achievement by subject be valuable to you? Why?
All the respondents indicated that GLA by subject is and/ or would be valuable to them. Four feel that it helps them to know where their children are standing. It lets them know if their children are struggling and in which areas, or if they are excelling. Three indicated that GLA by subject provides them with information so that they can better help their children. One parent indicated that GLA by subject is good to know for courses. Finally, one parent felt that GLA by subject helps her to know and understand how her child's teachers address her child's needs.

Value of GLA by subject	Responses)
To know where my child stands	4
So I can help my child	3
Good to know for courses	1
To know how teachers address needs	1

4. From your point of view, what are the best ways for a school to communicate student achievement information?
All six parents provided details on the best ways for a school to communicate student achievement. Four parents felt that parent-teacher interviews are the best ways to communicate GLA. Another parent specified that student-led parent-teacher-student interviews are best. Three parents expressed a desire for regular contact from a teacher when a child is performing either above or below grade level. Three parents indicated that report cards are a good way to communicate the information. Two parents indicated that they liked their schools' articles in newsletters and newspapers. Two parents suggested that teachers should put together evidence of what students are learning (i.e. in a portfolio). One parent indicated that they would like to receive the information via email, another through regular feedback. One parent felt that teacher's comments in her child's daily agenda (which must be initialed by parents) were a good way of keeping her up-to-date. One parent suggested that monthly reports would be helpful. Finally, three parents would like to receive more information on teachers' expectations and standards.

Best methods of communication	Responses
Parent-teacher interviews	4
Regular contact when concerns exist (or re gifted students)	3
Report cards	3
Share teachers' expectations and standards	3
Newsletters and newspaper articles	2
Evidence of what student is learning (i.e. portfolios)	2
Email	1
Regular feedback	1
Daily agenda	1
Monthly reports	1
Student-led conferences	1
Report on how school performs in relation to province	1

Appendix G.6.
SWOT Analysis Results

STRENGTHS

Strengths	Weight
GLA is the recognition of a teacher's capability of professionally making the assessment	25
Alberta has a well-defined, graded curriculum province wide (standard measuring scale)	21
GLA will supply better data to inform decision making at all levels	9
Strong knowledge base to draw from. There is already a capacity and an understanding of assessment	9
GLA is based on teacher judgments so there are a large number of data collection points, which increases the success/ accuracy of the assessment	8
GLA is a venue for involving parents	6
A lot of the technical infrastructure is already in place AND we know what needs to be done to implement the necessary data collection	4
GLA is evidence-based decision making	3
AISI is a resource that can be tapped into	3
Teachers have actually been doing it (making GLA judgments) for a long time. It is not new, just a formalization	3
Training infrastructure is in place (i.e. consortia and etc)	1
Planning processes are in place (i.e. Accountability pillars, 3YEPs, AERRs, Business Plans)	1
GLA gives so many opportunities & opens so many doors	1
Body of experience—Edmonton Public	--

WEAKNESSES

Weaknesses	Weight
Each jurisdiction needs to develop a mechanism to build understanding of the concept of GLA	20
Implementing all four subjects at once is too difficult. There are too many subjects with the addition of science and social studies, especially since those two subjects are so tied to content	17
Developing the necessary technology for data collection requires more time due to complexity	13
Teachers' willingness (or lack thereof) to accurately assign GLA and follow through with programming	9
Teachers fear that it will be used as an assessment of the teachers not of the students	7
There is a lack of committed funding	5
Most jurisdictions have never heard of GLA/ Beyond MIRS	5
Lack of resources to create a lot of IPPs	5
Questionable validity if teacher judgments are applied inconsistently	4
Lack of process and resources to assist parents in understanding GLA	4
Lack of a plan for provincial in-service	2
Too many competing priorities	2
Developing parental understanding of GLA	2
Lack of rubrics. (To be effective, teachers must develop their own!)	2
Potential for misrepresentation of GLA data	2
Changes to curriculum will impact GLA application	--
Competing technical priorities at the provincial level	--
Alberta Assessment Consortium's and Regional Consortia's lack of capacity	--
Lack of exemplars	--
Lack of departmental capacity	--
Teachers' lack of confidence	--
Not enough provincial capacity to provide the mentoring required	--

OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities	Weight
Parents have a better understanding of where child is at	24
Teachers more aware of curriculum	24
Improved philosophy of assessment through dialogue	21
Drive better programming (accountable, informed decisions)	7
Continuity/ consistency	5
More help for those above grade level	5
Easier to track child	5
Common measures to assess programs	4
Information is more clearly articulated to the parents	4
Complements PATs and provides information/ data at all levels, in the professional judgment of the teacher	2
Makes teachers more aware of assessment	1
Better support for children who need it	--
Parent can help child in areas of need	--
Increased parent-teacher interactions	--

THREATS

Threats	Weight
Is the data meaningful/ valid?	14
Inconsistencies between teachers	12
Lack of teacher knowledge about curriculum and assessment	11
Lack of parental understanding and buy-in	9
Lack of provincial and district support ($) to implement within the timeframe	8
Not enough time. 9 grades, 4 subjects by 2005 is too soon	7
Fear of misuse of data by Alberta Learning	7
GLA is a lot of work that will only help a small percentage of the population	6
Potential to label children and thereby restrict them	6
Breadth of curriculum knowledge necessary on the part of the teacher.	5
Enforced use of common measures	5
Large burden for the districts. GLA submission is distinct from other submission points/ times	2
Fear of discouraging students	2
Judgments could be passed on teachers/ programs	2
Parental surprise and misunderstanding (i.e. "Why am I suddenly being told my son is two grades behind?")	1
Time needed to inform/ educate parents	1
Parental backlash	1
Time – 1 year of voluntary submission is not enough	--
More time is necessary to develop assessment strategies	--
Cost and timing of developing a new data system	--
At least two years are required to develop and test a submission system	--
Need to figure out how to communicate the GLA at both the technical and interpersonal levels.	--
Teachers fear communicating unpleasant results/ judgments	--
GLA is additional pressure on existing resources	--
GLA may put more pressure on students	--
It will take several years to become comfortable with the validity of the data (teacher judgments)	--
Lack of budget/ resources for in-servicing and PD	--